



High School Education Program Requirements

Offer-and-Teach

Introduction

The general accreditation standards require each high school (grades 9-12) to “offer and teach” certain subjects and specify a minimum number of units for each course—although each administration selects its local curriculum, textbooks, and other classroom materials. Iowa Administrative Code subrule 281—12.5(5) outlines the offer-and-teach requirements. For interpretation of these requirements, refer to the [Chapter 12 Rule Interpretation Matrix](#).

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is offer-and-teach?

Offer-and-teach means that the school or school district must make students aware of the offering, employ an appropriately licensed teacher¹ to teach the course, and have the appropriately licensed teacher instruct the students. Licensure requirements are set by the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners (BOEE). Not only must a course be offered and taught by an appropriately licensed teacher, but at least one student needs to be enrolled in a course for it to meet the offer-and-teach requirement (Iowa Admin. Code r. 281—12.5(16)).

Offer-and-teach units may be met in the following ways with an appropriate Iowa-licensed teacher:

- Direct instruction by a teacher on-site;
- Whole grade sharing pursuant to Iowa Code section 282.10;
- Written agreement to jointly employ or share teachers pursuant to Iowa Code section 280.15 (school districts only); and
- Through community colleges for vocational education (also referred to as career and technical education or CTE) only pursuant to 12.5(5)“i.”

For additional information, refer to the [Chapter 12 Rule Interpretation Matrix](#).

¹ Appropriately licensed means the individual has a current Iowa teaching license that is appropriate for the student’s grade level and for the content area(s) being taught.

2. What are the minimum requirements for offer-and-teach?

All high schools (public and accredited nonpublic) must annually offer and teach the following as the minimum program:

Subject	Minimum Units for Districts	Minimum Units for Nonpublics
English-language arts	6 units	6 units
Social studies	5 units	5 units
Mathematics	6 units (4 sequential units and 2 additional units)	6 units (4 sequential units and 2 additional units)
Science	5 units	5 units
Health	1 unit	1 unit
Physical education (PE)	1 unit	1 unit
Fine arts	3 units	3 units
World language	4 units (see the following World Language Waiver section)	4 units (see the following World Language Waiver section)
Vocational education/CTE	12 (3 units each in at least 4 of the 6 service areas)	5 units, as specified 12.5(5)“j”
Computer science (Beginning in the 2022-23 school year)	½ unit	½ unit

WORLD LANGUAGE WAIVER

The Iowa Department of Education (Department) may waive the third and fourth years of world language on an annual basis if the school board requests a waiver and can provide documentation that a licensed or certificated teacher was employed and assigned a schedule that:

- Would have allowed students to enroll,
- The class was properly scheduled,
- Students were aware of the course offerings, and
- No students enrolled (Iowa Admin. Code r. 281—12.5(5)“h”).

3. What is a unit of instruction?

In grades nine through 12, a unit is a course that meets one of the following criteria:

- It is taught for at least 200 minutes per week for 36 weeks;
- It is taught for the equivalent of 120 hours of instruction;
- It requires the demonstration of proficiency of formal competencies associated with the course according to the State Guidelines for Competency-Based Education (CBE) or its successor organization; or
- It is an equated requirement as a part of an innovative program filed as prescribed in rule 281—12.9 (Iowa Admin. Code r. 281—12.5(14)).

FRACTIONAL UNIT

A fractional unit must be calculated in a manner consistent with subrule 281—12.5(14). Unless the method of instruction is competency-based, multiple-section courses taught at the same time in a single classroom situation by one teacher do not meet this unit definition for the assignment of a unit of credit (see the [CBE Program Standards guidance](#)). However, the third and fourth years of a world language may be taught at the same time by one teacher in a single classroom situation, each yielding a unit of credit.

REGULAR AND BLOCK SCHEDULING

With “regular” scheduling, a year-long course is normally the equivalent of one unit of instruction. A semester-length course is normally the equivalent of a one-half unit of instruction. With “block” scheduling, a block-length course taught for one semester is usually the equivalent of one unit. The same course taught in two different semesters does not count as two separate partial or full units of instruction.

4. Are offer-and-teach requirements met if the district or school only “offers” (and does not teach) a subject because no students are enrolled in the course? When is a subject considered offered? When is a subject considered taught?

No. It is not sufficient for a district to “offer” a course in the high school program and have no students receiving instruction. The course must also be “taught” to meet the requirements of offer-and-teach (Iowa Admin. Code r. 281—12.5(16)).

A subject is considered offered when:

- The teacher of the subject has met the licensure and endorsement standards of the BOEE for that subject;
- Instructional materials and facilities for that subject have been provided; and
- Students have been informed, based on their aptitudes, interests, and abilities, about the possible value of the subject (Iowa Admin. Code r. 281—12.5(16)).

A subject is considered taught when students are instructed in it in accordance with all applicable requirements outlined (e.g., at least one student is enrolled). Further, students enrolled in a course may not be enrolled for a second time if they have already received full credit for the same course (Iowa Admin. Code r. 281—12.5(16)).

5. Does a class offered outside the scheduled bell time meet offer-and-teach?

It depends. An “early bird” or “zero-hours” course must be offered during the school day to count toward offer-and-teach (Iowa Admin. Code r. 281—12.5(16)).

6. When sharing courses with another district, must students from both districts be enrolled to meet offer-and-teach?

Yes. Each participating high school must have students enrolled in the shared program for units of vocational instruction required under Iowa Code section 256.11(5)“h” to count toward offer-and-teach. Each district that sends students to a shared vocational program intending to fulfill the offer-and-teach requirements must provide transportation for students enrolled in the shared program. If a sending school district contracts with a receiving school district to provide a vocational program as part of the sending district’s offer-and-teach requirement, the sending district is required to provide transportation (Iowa Admin. Code r. 281—12.5(16); see the [Transportation for Shared Programs legal lesson](#)).

A district with multiple high schools and/or an alternative school does not need to meet offer-and-teach for all of the district’s high schools if students have access to courses in other buildings. However, students must be aware of the offerings and be provided access (e.g., transportation) to the other building courses.

7. Can courses offered through concurrent enrollment be used to meet a district's minimum program requirements?

Yes. A school district can use contracted community college courses to meet offer-and-teach requirements for one unit of math or one unit of science. However, the sharing agreement for a unit of science or mathematics is only applicable if all of the following conditions are met:

- The district has made every reasonable and “good-faith effort”² to employ a teacher licensed under chapter 272 for the science or mathematics unit (as applicable) and is unable to employ such a teacher;
- Enrollment for the unit exceeds five pupils;
- The unit is offered during the regular school day; and
- The unit is made accessible by the school district to all eligible pupils (Iowa Code § 257.11(3)“c”).

A school district may also contract with a community college to meet the offer-and-teach requirements for vocational education pursuant to Iowa Admin. Code r. 281—12.5(5)“i.”

8. May a teacher instruct two courses simultaneously? The district only has a Spanish teacher for part of the day. Can they teach Spanish 1/2 and Spanish 3/4 at the same time?

No. Only world language units three and four may be taught simultaneously unless the school meets the competency-based requirements in Iowa Admin. Code r. 281—12.5(5)“h.”

9. Can Algebra I-A and Algebra I-B be counted for offer-and-teach?

If Algebra I is offered, then no. If Algebra I-A, Algebra I-B, and Algebra I teach the same standards, they are considered the same course and only count as one unit toward the offer-and-teach requirements. The same would be true for other courses teaching the same standards and benchmarks (Iowa Admin. Code r. 281—12.5(5)“c”).

10. Does enrolling students in PE only one semester or trimester per year meet offer-and-teach?

Yes, but only with an approved [Chapter 12 Standards Exemption](#). The exemption is an annual requirement (Iowa Code § 256.11(5)“g” and Iowa Admin. Code r. 281—12.5(5)“f”). For additional guidance on PE, see the [PE and Health Education webpage](#).

11. Must physics and chemistry be offered each year?

No. They can be offered in alternate years. However, five units of science must be offered annually. If physics is offered every other year, the total number of science units required for offer-and-teach must still be five units (Iowa Admin. Code r. 281—12.5(5)“d”).

12. Can health be offered on alternate days with PE and meet offer-and-teach?

Yes. If the total health instructional time is equal to 120 hours or more during the year, it will count as one health unit. If the total instructional time is equal to 60 hours during the year, then it would count as a half unit (Iowa Admin. Code r. 281—12.5(5)“e”).

² A good-faith effort “includes advertising for the position in an appropriate publication, interviewing applicants, and giving serious consideration to those licensed or authorized, and otherwise qualified, applicants who apply” (Iowa Code § 279.19A(9)).

13. Can an economics course taught by a teacher with a CTE Business endorsement qualify for a unit of social studies credit toward the offer-and-teach requirements?

No. A business endorsement allows the course to qualify for business offer-and-teach only. The teacher must be endorsed in the content area (Iowa Admin. Code r. 281—12.5(16)).

14. Can an animal science course taught by a teacher with a CTE Agriculture endorsement qualify for a unit of science credit toward the requirements?

Only if the teacher also holds a science endorsement. The district or school must select only one area for the course to qualify for offer-and-teach, either science or agriculture (based on appropriate teacher endorsement), not both (Iowa Admin. Code r. 281—12.5(16)).

15. Can a computer science class qualify for a unit of math credit toward the offer-and-teach requirements? If yes, what are the requirements?

Yes, provided that the teacher holds an appropriate computer science endorsement and grade-level mathematics license, and the course contains math content. The [Computer Science Education Work Group Report](#), which was endorsed by Governor Reynolds, encourages school districts to allow computer science courses that meet state computer science standards and include math content to count as math credits for students who have completed other courses covering the required state math standards. In addition, a computer science course may fulfill a math requirement for graduation if the course meets state academic standards in math (e.g., an integrated Algebra II/Computer Science course).

Beginning July 1, 2022, all high schools (grades 9-12) must offer at least one high-quality semester-long course in computer science (Iowa Code § 256.11(5)“I”). For additional information regarding these requirements, see the [House File 2629 – Computer Science Instruction and Requirements Guidance](#).

16. Do independent study courses meet offer-and-teach guidelines?

No. Independent study courses do not meet the requirement of direct instruction (Iowa Admin. Code r. 281—12.5(5)).

17. Can a supervised study hall or lab that provides support to students in math or language arts qualify for offer-and-teach?

No. The supervised study hall or lab supports homework completion and does not provide direct instruction with distinct standards and benchmarks as is required for offer-and-teach (Iowa Admin. Code r. 281—12.5(5)).

18. Does an Advanced Placement (AP) course count for offer-and-teach, even when the content may be the same as a non-advanced course?

Yes. For example, AP US History and US History both count as a unit for offer-and-teach.

19. Can online AP courses be used to meet offer-and-teach?

Yes, provided that those courses are available to all students.

20. Do online courses used for offer-and-teach need a waiver?

It depends. Districts and accredited nonpublic schools may use two online courses to meet offer-and-teach without a waiver. In addition, districts and nonpublic schools may use online courses to meet offer and teach if they make every reasonable and good faith effort to employ a licensed teacher to teach the course but are unable to, or fewer than 10 students typically register for the course.

Please note that it is the responsibility of the district or accredited nonpublic school to provide an appropriately licensed Iowa teacher and align the online course(s) with applicable state and federal

academic standards (Iowa Code § 256.9(55)). For additional information, please see the [Online Learning](#) page.

21. Have any private online providers been approved?

Yes. Refer to the [Online Learning](#) page for a list of current providers.

22. What are the student graduation requirements?

All students in schools and school districts must satisfactorily complete at least the [following requirements to graduate](#):

- Four units of English-language arts;
- Three units of mathematics;
- Three units of science;
- Three units of social studies, which may include the existing graduation requirements of United States government (1/2 unit) and United States history (1 unit);
- One full unit of PE; and
- One-half unit of financial literacy ([Iowa Admin. Code r. 281—12.5\(5\)](#)).

In implementing the high school program standards, all districts and schools must use the curriculum standards specified in subrule [281—12.5\(5\), paragraphs a through l](#).

Additional Questions and Resources

Contacts

Please contact the appropriate Department school improvement consultant with questions:

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Supplemental Resources

IOWA CODE AND ADMINISTRATIVE RULES

- [High School Educational Standards](#) (Iowa Code § 256.11(5))
- [General Accreditation Standards](#) (Iowa Admin. Code 281—12)
- [Definitions](#) (Iowa Admin. Code r. 281—12.2)
- [Chapter 12 Interpretation Matrix](#)

LETTERS TO THE FIELD

- [Letter to the Field - 2021 Legislative Session Summary of Changes Affecting Schools](#)
- [Letter to the Field - 2020 Legislative Session Summary of Changes Affecting Schools](#)
- [Letter to the Field - 2019 Legislative Session Summary of Changes Affecting Schools](#)

DEPARTMENT WEBPAGES

- [Instruction](#)
 - [Competency-Based Education](#)
 - [Computer Science](#)
 - [Fine Arts](#)
 - [Financial Literacy](#)
 - [Health Education](#)
 - [Literacy](#)
 - [Mathematics](#)
 - [PE and Health Education](#)
 - [Science](#)
 - [Social Studies](#)
 - [World Languages](#)
- [Career and Technical Education](#)
- [Graduation Requirements](#)
- [Online Learning](#)